



Marshall Space Flight Center
Engineering Solutions and Prototyping Contract
Request for Information

February 21, 2012

INTRODUCTION

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) invites you to submit a response to this inquiry with the intent to assist Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC) in planning the Engineering Solutions and Prototyping Contract (ESP) acquisition. Any competition sensitive data should be clearly marked. However, NASA reserves the right to share all information received in response to this RFI throughout NASA and to use all information submitted in response to this RFI in NASA's formulation of potential solicitations seeking competitive proposals on contracts for or related to the requirements described herein. Although information contained herein represents current program content and acquisition planning, it is subject to change. Response to this RFI is requested within the context of the general approach described in the following paragraphs.

BACKGROUND AND CAPABILITIES

Historically MSFC has primarily acquired engineering services and products via the Engineering, Science & Technical Services (ESTS), Specialized Engineering & Project Support Blanket Purchase Agreements (SEP BPA's) and Systems Development and Operations Support (SDOS) contractual vehicles. A comprehensive review of these current contracts was performed in order to develop an integrated strategy for acquiring engineering services and products along the lines of natural groupings of expertise. The review and resulting acquisition strategy has led MSFC to pursue four procurements (see Figure 1). The ESP contract is considered to be one of the natural groupings of expertise for the procurement of engineering products.



Figure 1 – Acquisition Strategy by Natural Grouping of Expertise

DESCRIPTION OF REQUIREMENTS

NASA has a requirement to obtain end-item deliverables for MSFC from off-site sources. These sources will provide engineering solutions and products for design, development, test, evaluation, operations, and training in support of MSFC's flight projects, human and robotic exploration, science and technology development, and future programs/projects as well as other MSFC responsibilities that have similar needs. The ESP contract will provide MSFC with an avenue to obtain deliverables at various stages of the lifecycle as defined in NASA's Systems Engineering Handbook. Examples of deliverables include but are not limited to analyses/studies, design definition, technology maturation, prototypes, hardware/software systems development, and ESP deliverables operations support/training. Please note that more details of the requirements contained herein will be forthcoming in any resultant solicitation.

ACQUISITION APPROACH

NASA requires contractors, or a team of contractors, to perform the ESP requirements described in this RFI. NASA intends to award multiple indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) cost reimbursement contracts to the selected contractors based on best value solutions provided by industry. NASA will utilize full and open competition as its acquisition process.

TENTATIVE ACQUISITION SCHEDULE

- Release Draft RFP – April, 2012
- Release RFP – May, 2012
- Proposals Due – July, 2012
- Contract Award – October, 2012

RFI REQUESTED RESPONSE TOPICS

The specific objective of this RFI is to solicit information within the context of the approach described herein that may potentially enhance NASA's planning for the ESP contracts and assist in developing the acquisition strategy. Comments are requested to all or any of the following topics.

(1) PROPOSAL CONTENT AND PREPARATION

a) Traditionally NASA and MSFC have used written proposal responses to evaluate the Mission Suitability Factor. Since this is considered to be a research and development supply contract in lieu of the typical NASA service contract award, MSFC is very interested in using a mix of written and oral proposals for the Mission Suitability Factor. It is envisioned that the management oriented content would be written and the technical oriented content would be oral. Comments are sought relative to:

- Assuming the page limit for the written portion of the Mission Suitability volume is significantly smaller than for typical service acquisitions, what is the impact to contractor bid and proposal budgets to prepare and present an oral proposal? Is it more, less or about the same and why?
- Does this approach pose an undue burden on small businesses?
- What impact does this approach have on proposal preparation schedules? Is it longer, shorter or about the same and why?
- Other thoughts, comments and/or lessons learned on the use of oral proposals.

b) It is anticipated that a feature of the oral portion of the proposal would be the submittal of a product (end item) deliverable(s) with the requirements for same being contained in a sample delivery order. The goal of the sample delivery order end item submittal is to provide offerors with an opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities in a tangible manner. The parameters of any requested sample delivery order end item deliverable would be constrained to the form, fit and function of items which can efficiently and economically be created/produced within a standard proposal preparation schedule. Comments are sought relative to:

- Does this approach create an undue burden on the proposal process and if so why?
- Examples (with Government POC information) of other non-MSFC competitive acquisitions that have featured a similar capability proposal demonstration and any resultant lessons learned.
- Does this approach pose an undue financial burden on small business led teams?

(2) SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

NASA and MSFC are committed to providing our small business community with contracting opportunities that are vital to our nation's space exploration programs. In the acquisition planning for ESP, it has been determined to emphasize this commitment by providing a preference for small businesses in the proposal evaluation process with the objective to award at least one of the multiple IDIQ contracts to a small business prime. Also, NASA intends to include significant small business and small disadvantaged business subcontracting goals in the IDIQ contract(s) awarded to large business. Comments are sought relative to:

- Input as to the definition of a small business preference and the implementation thereof within the evaluation phase of the acquisition. Where applicable, references (with Government POC contact information) to other non-MSFC competitive acquisitions

that have featured a similar evaluation preference for small business and any resultant lessons learned are sought.

- Input as to the definition of the contract performance surveillance criteria/process/incentive for evaluating contractor performance relative to subcontracting goals. Specific input is sought as to the contractors' individual experience(s) in performance evaluation at the contract level or at the delivery order level for multiple award IDIQ contracts.

(3) GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY

NASA envisions that considerable interaction between Government and contractor personnel will be needed in the successful performance of delivery orders issued under ESP contracts. To that end, NASA has established an objective that industry firms are located within a short commuting distance of MSFC. Comments are sought relative to:

- NASA's objective for a short commuting distance and inputs relative to evaluation criteria.
- Examples of other procurements (with Government POC information) which contained objective and/or subjective evaluation criteria for a similar geographic proximity preference.

(4) POTENTIAL FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Due to the number of contractors that may be involved with ESP, it will be essential for contractors to work together closely within both the ESP framework as well as with the selected awardees for Engineering & Science Services & Skills Augmentation (ESSSA) and Marshall Integrated Program Support Services (MIPSS). With this in mind describe advantages and disadvantages to teaming arrangements and associate contractor agreements. Identify potential organization conflicts of interest and propose solutions thereto. Provide recommendations on how to facilitate establishing these critical relationships.

(5) CONTRACT TYPE AND TERMS

NASA's goal is to award multiple IDIQ contracts that properly balance risk and reward excellent contractor performance. NASA envisions the award of a long-term contract with a performance period up to five years. NASA intends to periodically re-compete follow-on contracts for these products. Comments are sought for, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- a) Recommendations and supporting rationale for contract structure, contract type, fee approach, and period of performance. Comments are requested on the timeframe as well as any alternate recommendations

where a more logical breakpoint exists that would allow recompetition of the products acquired under this contract.

Traditionally the type of effort envisioned would include some form of a fixed and/or incentive fee arrangement. NASA is interested in your input regarding fee arrangements to include previous experiences (with Government POC contact information) that worked well. You are requested to suggest traditional and non-traditional ideas on contract types and fee approaches that would achieve NASA's goal to properly balance risk and reward contractor performance.

b) NASA's long-term goal on subsequent follow-on contracts is to obtain all or some of these services under a fixed price contract. Address any known or potential risks associated with a fixed price contract arrangement, and recommend any appropriate mitigation techniques. Identify any steps that may be taken in the near-term contract to achieve the long-term fixed price goal.

(6) DELIVERY ORDER COMPETITION

FAR Part 16 provides guidance on the use of multiple award contracts. This guidance provides for competition (with limited exceptions) of all delivery orders (DO) resulting from multiple award IDIQ contracts. While NASA is aware of the benefits to be gained from DO competition, one of its drawbacks can be the length of time it takes from requirement definition to DO award. NASA's objective is a quick turnaround on small to medium dollar value delivery orders. To that end, NASA is seeking innovative solutions to reduce the time it takes to conduct DO competitions. One technique that NASA is very interested in is use of oral proposals in DO competitions. Comments are sought relative to:

- Industry perspective on the positive and/or negative impacts when oral proposals are used in delivery order competitions.
- Input on DO proposal content either written and/or oral.
- Examples of other procurements (with Government point of contact [POC] information) which established efficient DO competition procedures and processes.
- Suggestions for innovative DO competition procedures/processes, that complies with FAR Part 16 guidance.

RESPONSE INSTRUCTIONS

The information obtained will be used by NASA for planning and acquisition strategy development. Providing data/information that is limited or restricted for use by NASA for that purpose would be of little value and such restricted/limited data information is not solicited. NASA will use the information obtained as a

result of this RFI on a non-attribution basis. NASA does not intend to post information or questions received to any website or public access location. NASA does not plan to respond to the individual responses, but will provide an update to its acquisition plans at an appropriate time and event such as an Industry Day.

This RFI is being used to obtain information for planning purposes only, subject to FAR Clause 52.215-3, entitled "Solicitation for Information and Planning Purposes". This RFI does not constitute a Request for Proposal, Invitation for Bid, or Request for Quotation. The Government does not presently intend to award a contract at this time, and this RFI is not to be construed as a commitment by the Government to enter into a contract. As stipulated in FAR 15.201(e), responses to this notice are not considered offers and cannot be accepted by the Government to form a binding contract. Moreover, the Government will not pay for the information submitted in response to this RFI, nor will the Government reimburse for costs incurred to prepare responses to this RFI.

All responses should be prepared in MS Word document format utilizing Arial size 12 font, with submittals limited to a total of 15 pages. Responses should reference "RFI-MSFC-ESP". Submit a copy of your response via email to Mark York at Mark.A.York@nasa.gov, no later than 5pm CST on March 7, 2012. Submit one original hardcopy (postmarked no later than 3-7-12) to NASA/MSFC Procurement Office, Attn: PS40/Mark York, Contracting Officer, Marshall Space Flight Center, AL 35812. Questions should be provided to Mark York via email.

Advance notification of intent to submit a response to this RFI is requested via email by February 24, 2012 to Mark York. This notification should include a statement as to whether the company intends to participate as a prime or subcontractor. Those participating as prime contractors should also include a list of teammates.

No solicitation exists; therefore, do not request a copy of this solicitation. If a solicitation is released it will be synopsisized in the FedBizOpps and on the NASA Acquisition Internet Service (NAIS). It is the potential offeror's responsibility to monitor these sites for the release of any solicitation or synopsis.

POINT OF CONTACT

Contracting Officer
Mark York
NASA/MSFC Procurement Office
256-544-4028
Mark.A.York@nasa.gov